

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS AT ATLANTIC CLUB
SOFIA, BULGARIA
JULY 18, 1994

Solomon Passy (President of Atlantic Club) - in Bulgarian: Honorable ministers; honorable members of parliament; honorable justices of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts; excellencies, the foreign ambassadors. In the past half century two wars have connected Bulgaria and the United States. One of them was the war that Bulgaria declared on the United States on Dec. 13, 1941. The decision for this war was perhaps the most poorly thought through and useless least independent military act in the 13-century history of our nation. The second war, the war in which the allies in the Persian Gulf fought was a war of world democracy against world terrorism, and here the great national assembly and the president of the republic made one of the best thought through foreign-policy decisions which laid the foundations of our free foreign policy. In this battle the Atlantic Club was also born. Today the visit of the Secretary of Defense of the United States to Bulgaria, the honorable William Perry, the first such visit in the history of the two nations, puts an end to the political consequences of a war between two nations and opens the way to a long-range, political-military alliance between us, which began in the Persian Gulf, merged into the Partnership for Peace, and I believe it will grow into our future membership in NATO. Ms. Minister, you have the floor, please.

Sec. Perry: Thank you very much. As you know, this is not only my first visit to Bulgaria, but the first visit of any American Secretary of Defense, and I am pleased and honored to be the Secretary of Defense who could initiate this relationship. But let me start off by saying why I did not come here, which is I did not come to Bulgaria, in spite of rumors to the contrary, to recruit football players. I do believe, though, that Bulgaria is going to be seeing a lot more recruiters for football players in the years to come, and I also promise you that four years from now in the World Cup, the United States will look forward to the competition, including the competition with a very excellent team Bulgaria fields. I have come here instead on behalf of President Clinton to emphasize how important Bulgaria and the Bulgarian transition to democracy is to the United States and to our concept of European security. More specifically, I came on this trip with three objectives: the first was to continue our work to find a solution to the conflict in Bosnia and to prevent that conflict from spreading. Secondly, I came to strengthen the friendship and security ties between the United States and Bulgaria, and third I came to encourage Bulgaria to take full advantage of the NATO Partnership for Peace opportunities. Just this afternoon, Minister of Defense Alexandrov and I signed a memorandum of cooperation that outlines the scope and the direction of our widening military relationship. I should emphasize to you that although we just signed that memorandum of cooperation today, that we have had programs of cooperation underway for some months now, and this simply formalizes the programs already underway and paves the way for new and more significant programs in the future. And with this

document we put the cold-war years further behind us and thereby establish a new bilateral security relationship. This memorandum spells out a number of steps that our two nations together can take to move forward on a defense cooperation program, from establishing a working group to oversee our efforts - we call it the bilateral working group - to expanding contacts and a wide range of defense activities. We've already had the first meeting of the bilateral working group here in Sofia, and we're looking forward to the next meeting later this year. These meetings would have been unheard of during the Cold War: American and Bulgarian officials sitting down at the same table, much less sitting down at the same table, to exchange information and ideas on defense and democracy. Our goal is to help Bulgaria's military achieve democratic reform, reshape its forces to serve democracy under civilian leadership, and to modernize its forces. Democratic reform, of course, goes well beyond Bulgaria's borders. Our grandest hope is that the creation of a broad, stable, peaceful European security system, one that replaces the cold-war divisions and animosities. We want a Europe in which no nation threatens its neighbors, where there are no common enemies, and all nations respect human rights, independent states and secure borders. Let me repeat that, because that is the essence of our position in Europe, that all nations respect human rights, independent states and secure borders. And we want a free, democratic Bulgaria to take its rightful place in this new security system. Bulgaria has already taken two very welcome steps in this direction. First, by helping to prevent the conflict in Bosnia from spreading further, and second by joining the Partnership for Peace. Let me take this occasion to say how much the United States appreciate Bulgaria's efforts to contain the conflict in Bosnia. We fully recognize the economic losses that you have suffered in Bosnia, because your nation has suffered to enforce the sanctions regime. But we believe that that cause is right, and we believe that it is not only in the interests of the greater community, but more specifically, in the medium to long-range interest of Bulgaria. The second step that Bulgaria has taken to establish its place in the new European security system, a step that is similar in spirit to the Black Sea exercises, is to join NATO's Partnership for Peace. This partnership was created to offer the new democracies in Europe an opportunity to establish a close working relationship with NATO and the military establishments of the alliance members. We are pleased that Bulgaria was one of the first nations to sign this Partnership for Peace, and we strongly encourage Bulgaria to maintain its enthusiasm for the Partnership and to continue to take full advantage of its membership. In sum, then, I believe that Bulgaria has made very important strides toward democracy. We in the United States applaud Bulgaria's commitment to democratic principles and to its determination to travel the path of political, economic and military reform. We understand that Bulgaria faces a number of very tough challenges, but these are important goals, and we've seen from the performance of the Bulgarian team in the World Cup that Bulgaria knows a thing or two about overcoming challenges and meeting tough goals. Thank you very much. I would be happy to entertain questions and comments from the audience at this point.

Mr. Passy (in Bulgarian): Thank you, Mr. Secretary. As you heard, you have the floor for questions and answers. In fact, Mr. Perry has not come here to recruit Bulgarian football players, but after all, the fact that the United States was the host to the World Cup was perhaps in our favor in this case, and today is another memorable date that coincides with his visit - today is the birthdate of Vassil Levski [a 19th-century Bulgarian patriot against the Turks]. I think that the combination of all these circumstances gives us the opportunity for a very good discussion, for which I see many people are already raising their hands. Mr. Ognian Minchev, you have the floor.

Question: Mr. Defense Secretary, following the regulations of the conventional arms treaty of 1989, Bulgaria, as a former Warsaw Pact country is subjected to quite a substantial conventional disarmament process. At the same time, simultaneously, the NATO members on the Balkans, I mean Greece and Turkey, are rearming themselves quite heavily in the last years. I would suggest that this imbalance in conventional arms - disarmament and rearmament in the Balkans - is quite dangerous, especially facing the present-day regional environment. Would you please describe the future U.S. policies in the region, bearing in mind the fact that this imbalance has a very substantial impact on the psychological insecurity in the region. This is the first point, and second that actually there are no more Warsaw Pact countries in the region, but NATO members and Partnership for Peace members. Thank you.

Sec. Perry: Thank you, that is a very good question. I start off by saying that the United States strongly supports the CFE and supports it the way it was written and agreed to. And therefore, we continue to support all nations that are signatories to that treaty to complying with the terms in the CFE. And, to my present knowledge, all the nations that signed that treaty are at this stage still complying. The issue is whether some may want to back off in the future, not whether there have been violations at this point. Let me take a second aspect of your question now, which is with the ending of the Cold War and with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, doesn't this really create a condition in which a more general disarmament can occur, even going beyond the CFE. And I believe that is the case. We are promoting that through a number of avenues, one for one by example. In the United States we will have by the middle of this decade, that is by 1995-1996, we will have effected more than a 40% reduction in the resources we put to our defense program, and this was precisely because the Cold War is over, and therefore the threats which we were preparing for during the 60s and 70s and 80s were no longer present. Now we encourage in that same regard, but we are just one sovereign nation speaking with other sovereign nations, and unless they have already agreed by treaty to voluntarily limit their arms, we certainly have no ability to force that on other nations.

Question (Daniela Kaneva): Mr. Secretary, this is Bulgarian national TV, channel 1. On the way to Europe, to Rumania, I am sorry to use the floor now, but I say there won't be any

conference. You have said on the plane that if the peace plan for Bosnia is not going to be concluded in the near future, there would be some danger for intense war there. In case the American presence in Bosnia is going to be enlarged, well, you have said yourself that Bulgaria has suffered a lot from the conflicts in the Gulf War and ex-Yugoslavia, what kind of guarantees can Bulgaria rely on, in case some military conflicts spreads all over the Balkans. We have joined Partnership for Peace, but it doesn't give us clear guarantees. Thank you.

Sec. Perry: Thank you. The Partnership for Peace, as you correctly point out, does not give you a full security guarantee. It goes very far, though, towards increasing your security, not just by signing and becoming a member, but, more importantly, by participating with the NATO members in training, in partnership, in education programs, and that is Bulgaria is taking a leadership position in doing that. Now, let me also comment on the prospects in Bosnia. The so-called contact group, which consists of Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the European Community, have presented a peace plan to the parties that are fighting the war there. They've asked for an answer to this by tomorrow, and then the contact group will meet again on Wednesday to determine what actions are appropriate, based on what answers they get. Now, they've already indicated that if one side or the other rejects the peace plan, they would bring various kinds of pressure to bear on that nation. All of those pressures - any or all of those pressures - would have the risk associated with it of making the peace-keeping plan in Bosnia less tenable and therefore has a risk associated with it of some of the countries presently in the U.N. peace-keeping forces deciding to pull out. Several of them have already suggested that they might pull out under those conditions. If the U.N. force pulls out, then I believe and I fear there would be a greatly more intense conflict with an increased danger of that conflict spreading out beyond Bosnia.

Mr. Passy: Thank you, Ivan Sotirov is raising his hand, from the Center for Training Staff for National Security.

Question (in Bulgarian): Honorable Mr. Minister. Bulgarian policy for full membership in the Atlantic and European structures for security meets with more and more understanding and support in the West, especially in the United States. My question is, can the issue of standardization of armaments and technology and, more concretely, the compatibility of the armed forces, become an obstacle in the full integration of Bulgaria in these structures - under the condition that our country fits all the other criteria: political and economical?

Sec. Perry: First of all, let me say we strongly encourage the integration of European security with Atlantic security issues and the participation of Bulgaria in that. Now, we recognize that with the Partnership for Peace in particular that involves joint training and joint exercises there will be an equipment compatibility problem, is the question that you were raising. Let

me give you my opinion, as to the extent of that problem. First of all, I think it is an inconvenience, but not a serious problem that the major transportation and their weapons are different. That would not keep the forces in the different countries from operating and training together. Indeed, that is not substantially different from the situation in NATO today, where different nations have their own armament industry and produce their different weapons. Now, we have had in NATO some move toward standardization that has been focused on those areas most important to different nations operating together, and to oversimplify a difficult and complex problem, I would say the biggest single issue is in communications, in coordination and in interface of the communications of the different nations. That is the area where it seems to me that the immediate attention should be addressed. And addressing it involves - and it is not necessarily expensive and time-consuming to address that issue - it involves, first of all, developing common procedures, or protocols, for communicating with each other. That involves little or no expense, but it does involve communications officers getting together and coming to agreements on protocols. And secondly, it involves the establishment of some equipment interfaces between the communications equipment in one nation and the communication in another. In some cases, that interface may be difficult enough, that it would be more efficient to simply get new communications equipment, and indeed, one of the issues I discussed with the Minister Alexandrov today was the possibility of finding some excess United States communications equipment which we could supply to the Bulgarian peace-keeping battalion, for just that reason. So you have, your question anticipated the discussion that we were having just an hour or so ago.

Mr. Passy (in Bulgarian): Thank you. I promised Ambassador Montgomery not to delay the Secretary of State [sic] from his meeting with President Zhelev, because he said if we delayed him for his meeting with Zhelev, he won't give us Clinton after that. So, even though with all my regrets, I will have to disappoint you, as we don't have time for more questions. I can see that the interest is great, but I will ask Mr. Perry to promise us to return for a longer meeting with the Atlantic Club.

Sec. Perry: Thank you. I gladly accept.

Mr. Passy (in Bulgarian): And now, allow me on Levski's birthdate to present to Mr. Perry a Bulgarian icon.

Sec. Perry: This is a beautiful and historic scene depicted on this painting, and I will display this in my office with great pride as a memory of my trip to Bulgaria.

Mr. Passy (in Bulgarian): Thank you and thanks to the "Bulgaria" insurance company and to Dimiter Zhelev, who is here next to Ambassador Montgomery. Along with the Atlantic Club we had the pleasure of having this meeting. Convey our best regards to President Clinton. We await his visit.

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Bulgaria, Romania to get arms aid

By Susanne M. Schafer
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SOFIA, Bulgaria — Defense Secretary William Perry pledged yesterday to help Romania and Bulgaria acquire excess U.S. military equipment for peacekeeping operations outside the Balkans.

"We are anxious to be of assistance," he said after a meeting with Bulgarian Defense Minister Valentine Aleksandrov.

Mr. Perry said the items would include medical, communications and transportation equipment that is no longer needed by U.S. military forces.

The United States has provided similar items to other former Warsaw Pact members such as Poland and the Baltic republics of Latvia and Estonia as well as NATO allies Greece and Turkey.

A senior U.S. official traveling with Mr. Perry said the United States may be limited in its ability to provide much equipment since its stocks have been depleted. But the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Pentagon was interested in supporting the two Balkan nations in their peacekeeping efforts.

The official said the two nations would not be offering troops for any peacekeeping effort in Bosnia.

Mr. Perry came to Bulgaria after a one-day stop in Romania while on a weeklong tour aimed at bolstering U.S. military ties in the Balkan region.

Both Romania and Bulgaria have suffered economically because of the cutoff of their once-thriving trade with the former Yugoslavia. The two nations have

supported U.N. sanctions against the former Yugoslav government in order to help strengthen their ties with Western nations.

Mr. Perry is the first U.S. secretary to visit either country since they threw off the communist yoke in 1989.

In a speech to a pro-Western Bulgarian group known as the Atlantic Club, Mr. Perry warned anew of his fears that the 2-year-old war in Bosnia could explode again should an international peace plan be rejected and U.N. forces pull out.

"Then, I believe and I fear it will be a more intense conflict, with an increased danger of that conflict spreading," he said.

In an earlier meeting with Bulgarian Foreign Minister Stanislav Daskalov, Mr. Perry said the United States and Bulgaria have similar views of the situation in Bosnia and the need to focus on the peace process rather than seeking a military solution to the conflict.

Mr. Perry will travel today to Macedonia, where 500 U.S. troops are stationed as part of a U.N. operation to prevent the spread of ethnic conflict from neighboring Bosnia.

He also will visit the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo on Friday after stopping in Albania, Greece, Turkey and Italy before returning to Washington on Saturday.